

2010 LEGISLATIVE PREVIEW

State Representatives Frank Chopp & Jamie Pedersen

43rd Legislative District

OLYMPIA OFFICE:

339C Legislative Bldg.
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA
98504-0600
360-786-7920

DISTRICT OFFICE:

444 Ravenna Blvd.
Suite 106
Seattle, WA 98115
206-729-3223

E-MAIL & WEBSITE:

chopp.frank@leg.wa.gov
<http://housedemocrats.wa.gov/members/chopp>

COMMITTEES & LEADERSHIP:

Speaker of the House
Rules - *Chair*

**OLYMPIA OFFICE:**

318 John L. O'Brien Bldg.
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA
98504-0600
360-786-7826

DISTRICT OFFICE:

444 Ravenna Blvd.
Suite 106
Seattle, WA 98115
206-729-3206

E-MAIL & WEBSITE:

pedersen.jamie@leg.wa.gov
<http://housedemocrats.wa.gov/members/pedersen>

COMMITTEES & LEADERSHIP:

Judiciary – *Chair*
General Government Appropriations
Health Care & Wellness



CONFRONTING OUR CHALLENGES RESPONSIBLY AND COMPASSIONATELY

Dear neighbors,

We are living in challenging times. The economic downturn that began at the world's financial centers has extended into the lives of our families, friends and neighbors. We all know people who have been directly affected by this crisis.

Important state services face challenges, too. Decreasing consumer spending has caused tax revenues to plummet. Although we solved a \$9 billion revenue shortfall during the 2009 legislative session, depressed tax revenues plus an increased demand for state services during the "Great Recession" have resulted in a projected \$2.6 billion shortfall for us to bridge during the 2010 session, which began this month.

Addressing this economic crisis will test our core values and force us to examine our most basic ideas about government itself: How much do we value its services? When needs are many, how do we prioritize and focus our resources?

In our view, we can't with good conscience support a budget balanced entirely by cuts to vital services such as health care for the poor and the security lifeline for people with disabilities. Additional reductions in spending for public schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges are also a bad strategy. Unfortunately, these and other devastating cuts are being discussed in Olympia as solutions to the crisis. We believe the responsible approach to balancing the budget must include consideration of new, additional revenue.

Our state faces difficult, gut-wrenching choices. Our overriding goal is to use taxpayer money efficiently while protecting our core values.

While our district and state certainly face tough challenges, there are areas of good news. During the 2009 session, we achieved several important goals in our progressive agenda which we discuss inside.

The people of Washington also made history in November by approving the expansion of domestic partner rights in the "everything but marriage" bill, making our voters the first in the country to approve rights for same-sex couples and their families. Over 91 percent of voters in our district voted to approve Referendum 71. We also voted overwhelmingly against Tim Eyman's Initiative 1033, which will help local and state governments to avoid even more drastic cuts to important services.

As we start the 2010 Legislative session, please call or email us with your ideas, concerns, and comments.

Sincerely,

Frank Chopp *Jamie Pedersen*

TOLL-FREE HOTLINE:
1-800-562-6000



House Speaker Frank Chopp

Preserving the values of our state during a national recession

The 2009 legislative session presented us with challenges that our state has not seen before. We witnessed the crash of Wall Street, the collapse of the housing market, and the effects of the national recession causing people to lose jobs and benefits here in Seattle. The sharp decline in state revenue forced us to focus on our highest priorities.

The 2009-2011 operating budget rose to that challenge. We protected basic education, fully funded Apple Health for Kids, and kept the safety net in place for those most in need:

✓ Expanding the Apple Health for Kids health care plan

Currently, through our Apple Health program, we've achieved coverage for 96 percent of children. This year, Apple Health will directly provide health care for 780,000 young people, an increase of more than 100,000 from the previous budget. Our goal is to provide healthcare coverage for ALL children by 2010. House Bill 2128 will help us lead the nation and ensure that every child in Washington has an opportunity for a healthy and successful future.



✓ Helping the unemployed

During hard times, when people need it the most, we are providing added funding for unemployment benefits, increasing the weekly amounts and expanding the training benefits program. HB 1906 raised the unemployment benefits by \$45/week to help families get back on their feet.

✓ Funding the Disability Lifeline

General Assistance-Unemployable (GA-U) provides a security lifeline of cash and medical benefits to more than 30,000 people with disabilities that make them unable to work for more than 90 days. By achieving savings in medical benefits for GA-U recipients, we were able to retain this important program to protect the most vulnerable.

✓ Passing historic public works infrastructure

We have undertaken the largest public construction effort in state history, including major transportation projects and school construction projects from UW and Seattle Central Community College to Hamilton International Middle School in our district. We also invested \$100 million in the Housing Trust Fund and provided funding for the purchase of the University Heights Community Center and the Phinney Neighborhood Center.

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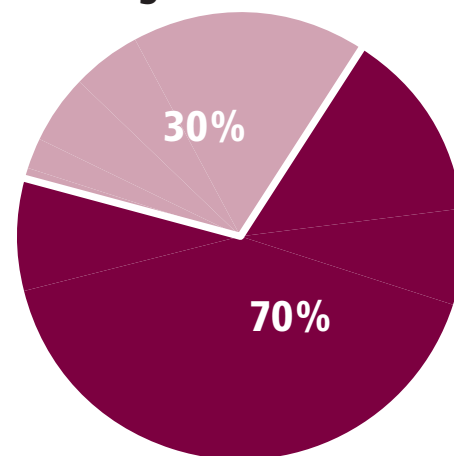
State budget snapshot

Washington state faces an estimated \$2.6 billion shortfall because of lower-than-expected tax revenues. Our situation is not unique: 48 other states have experienced deficits during the past 12 months of this unprecedented economic downturn.

In 2009, we balanced a \$9 billion shortfall with a combination of program cuts, fund transfers, salary freezes, and federal dollars from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

As we figure out options for balancing the new \$2.6 billion shortfall, it's important to realize that our flexibility is very limited. About 70 percent of the budget is off-limits due to constitutional protections, debt service and funding obligations, and federal requirements for programs such as Medicaid and foster care. Of the \$31 billion total budget, just \$9.3 billion is available to work with.

Majority of \$31 Billion Budget is Protected

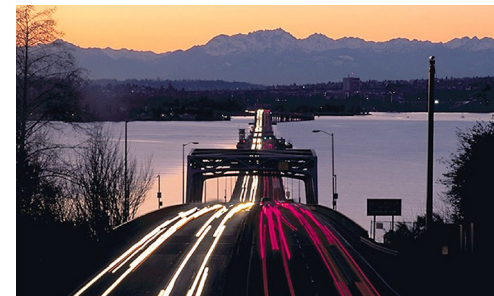


Not protected
\$9.3 billion

Protected
\$21.6 billion

It's a tough challenge, but one that we'll get through. The governor proposed her plan in early December, but we'll develop a better plan that includes new revenue for priority programs.

SR 520 BRIDGE UPDATE



On December 8, the SR 520 Legislative Workgroup—a group of officials tasked by the Legislature to examine the west side bridge design and financing plans for replacing the bridge—issued its recommendation to build a six-lane bridge with a wider Montlake interchange, including a second drawbridge over the Montlake cut. As members of the group, we participated actively in the discussions and worked hard to produce a better recommendation.

We both voted against the majority recommendation and have significant concerns about it:

- Transit: The recommended design does not meet the Legislature's requirement of an effective connection for transit from the 520 bridge to the new light rail station at Husky Stadium. Buses would be required to wait in traffic during 18 hours a day of bridge openings.
- Quality of life: The recommended option will bring adverse noise, traffic, and environmental issues to the communities most directly affected by 520. As a result, there is likely to be expensive litigation and many years of delay.

We can address the immediate safety issues by retrofitting or rebuilding the Madison Park to I-5 portion of the bridge and continuing with the rest of the project as planned.

We will work to make sure that the Legislature's ultimate decision on the replacement of SR 520 addresses these concerns and the needs of the communities we represent.

State Representative Jamie Pedersen



My Priorities

✓ Strengthening families

Together with Sen. Ed Murray and a large, bipartisan group of supporters, I worked hard to secure passage of Senate Bill 5688, which expands the rights and responsibilities afforded to same-sex couples to match those of married spouses.

Unfortunately, right-wing activists felt these basic legal rights were not important, and they launched a campaign to repeal the law. Although I do not believe that civil rights should be subject to popular vote, I'm proud that Washington voters viewed this as an issue of fundamental fairness and decided to uphold the law in the November election.

Marriage equality is our community's ultimate goal, but domestic partnership in the meantime provides real, meaningful benefits to committed same-sex couples as we continue advancing our dialog with the broader public on the importance of marriage equality. For more information, please visit the Secretary of State's domestic partnership Web site: <http://www.sec.state.wa.gov/corps/domesticpartnerships>



✓ Empowering foster youth

Last session we passed House Bill 1492, a bill I sponsored to improve the Independent Youth Housing Program. The program, which I helped to create in 2007, helps foster youth when they turn 18 to make a successful transition to independence. Since it began, we've identified several ways it can be improved, so this bill makes those enhancements. We have also authorized dedicated revenue to support these services: \$1.8 million over the next two years.

✓ Looking ahead to 2010

As the chair of the House Judiciary Committee, I am looking forward to the 2010 session. Our major priorities include:

- Giving remedies to homebuyers who experience construction defects in their houses;
- Providing a limited right for non-parents to petition for visitation with children;
- Allowing infertile couples to compensate a surrogate mother for carrying a child for them;
- Protecting the victims of domestic violence; and
- Reducing costs for low-income tenants looking for new apartments.

✓ Stay connected

If you would like to receive regular e-mail updates from me during the 2010 session, please contact my legislative assistant Katy Buck at buck.katy@leg.wa.gov to sign up.

State Representatives Frank Chopp & Jamie Pedersen

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Helpful Resources



APPLE HEALTH FOR KIDS

To learn more about Washington's children's health care service, including determining your family's eligibility, call 877-543-7669, or go online to <http://maa.dshs.wa.gov/AppleHealth>

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Call the Employment Security Department at 800-318-6022 (TTY 800-365-8969) between 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, or go online to <http://www.esd.wa.gov>

FORECLOSURE ASSISTANCE

The Department of Financial Institutions' Home Ownership Hotline provides counseling to residents who are facing foreclosure, thinking of buying a home, or considering refinancing. Call 877-894-4663, or go online to <http://www.homeownership.wa.gov>

INSURANCE INFORMATION

The Office of the Insurance Commissioner provides information on health, automobile, home, life and other types of insurance available in Washington state. Call 800-562-6900 or go online to <http://www.insurance.wa.gov> For free health care counseling, contact the SHIBA hotline at 800-562-6900.

LEGISLATURE

Our own contact information is listed on the front cover of this newsletter. Please contact our offices if you have a question or need help navigating state government services. To learn more about the legislative process itself or read bills, visit the Legislature's Web site at <http://www.leg.wa.gov> Many state government activities are also broadcast on Washington's own public affairs channel, TVW. Check with your television provider for channel information or visit <http://www.tvw.org> for archived coverage.



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**Representatives
Frank Chopp &
Jamie Pedersen**
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600